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THE ARTIST

T HOMAS GIRTIN

WHEN Thomas Girtin died on the 9th of November, 1802, he was not more than 27 years of age. His untimely death, before his art had hardly reached maturity, accounts for the scarcity of his works, and this again is responsible for the comparative lack of recognition of Girtin abroad, and even, to a certain extent, at home. 'The name of Girtin has scarcely, I imagine, ever travelled beyond the borders of Britain. Even in his own country he is little more than a name. He suffers, doubtless, with other water-colour artists, from the lack of opportunity for being seen and studied. Let us hope that when the centenary of 1802 comes round, it may be found possible to organise an exhibition of his drawings. To many such an exhibition would be a revelation.'

The appeal made by Laurence Binyon in his admirable volume* on the life and work of the man who may in justice be called the 'father of water-colour painting in England' will find an echo in the heart of every art-lover who has seen the beautiful set of drawings by Girtin at the British Museum. The twenty-one auto-type illustrations by which the volume is adorned help to give as excellent an idea of the quality of Girtin's drawings as can be obtained in monochrome, although a few of them appear a little blurred in the dark parts, which may be partly due to the effect of age on the paper.

Mr. Binyon's critical essay is the more valuable as a contribution to the history of British Art, as it is the first exhaustive book that has been written on the subject, and as its author's appreciation of Girtin's work has not carried him away to that exaggerated praise which often deprives similar monographs of their value as criticism and places them on the level of mere appreciation. The most interesting chapter is probably the one dealing with the influence of Canaletto on British Art in general and on Thomas Girtin in particular, a point which has

escaped the critics' notice up to the present. An inspection of the unique collection of works by Antonio Canale, which form part of the Wallace Collection at Hertford House, will do much towards confirming the truth of Mr. Binyon's assertion.

T HE PRE-RAPHAELITES

MANY volumes have been written and published in England during the last decades, on the pre-Raphaelite movement and its influence on the art of the day; criticisms, memories, diaries, biographies, from Ruskin down to Percy Bate, have thrown light from every direction on this most important phase in the history of British art, so that it would be difficult to find anything new to record on a subject that has been so thoroughly 'threshed out.' Not so abroad, where the chances of selling pictures of the British schools are comparatively rare, and where the pre-Raphaelite battle still excites the interest of art lovers. Mr. H. Fred's new book on the pre-Raphaelites* is, we think, the first German book dealing exclusively with this subject, of which the author appears to have made a careful study. The originator of the revolutionary movement in British art is, according to the German writer, not Ford Madox Brown, to whom this position is generally accorded by our own critics, but William Dyce, who was born in 1806, and had reached his full maturity when the struggle of the brotherhood commenced. Ruskin, F. Madox Brown, Holman Hunt, Millais, Rossetti, Burne-Jones, and their followers form the subject-matter for the other chapter. A certain picturesqueness of style makes the volume pleasant reading. There are also a few illustrations of well-known works by the authors under discussion, the 'Proserpina' on the cover being of particular excellence.

* Thomas Girtin, His Life and Works. An Essay by Laurence Binyon. (London: Seeley and Co., Ltd.) 1900.

* Die Prae-Raphaeliten, by W. Fred (Strassburg: J. H. Ed. Heite, 1909).